PARENTING THE DIGITAL GENERATION

Handing a child an internet-enabled device is like handing them access to the whole world, and the whole world access to them. This has the potential to benefit or harm them. Caregivers must ensure that their child, when given a device, is mature enough to handle that responsibility and that they are prepared for what they may face.

FOUR AREAS OF CONCERN

PRIVACY

Before allowing children access to the internet, discuss what information should **not** be shared online, for example:

- Passwords
- School name
- Phone numbers
- Addresses
- Locations (including statuses and geo-tagging)

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Online, children are exposed to and/or contribute to content that is inappropriate and harmful to their well-being. This can include:

- Excessive violence
- Risky or illegal behavior
- Hate speech
- Sexually explicit material

SEXUAL SOLICITATION

While exceptions do exist, most frequently, teens are solicited by peers on social media networks they already utilize. There are two primary problems we see in this area: sexting and sextortion. Sexting is sending or receiving sexually explicit messages and nude or partially nude images via mobile devices. Sextortion involves threats to expose a sexual image. Perpetrators are often current, former, or would-be romantic or sexual partners attempting to harass, embarrass, or control victims.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is defined as bullying that takes place over digital devices such as cell phones, computers, or tablets. This includes but is not limited to:

- Posting hateful, hurtful, or embarrassing comments, pictures, or videos
- Spreading rumors
- Creating a cruel or hurtful webpage or social media profile
- Pretending to be someone else in order to post personal or false information about someone

CREATE A STRATEGY

Create conversations around responsible and respectful behavior. This should include conversations around healthy relationships, sexuality, responses to peer pressure, and consequences for their online and real world behavior.

PREVENTING EXPOSURE

Know the capabilities and internet accesibility of each device. Utilize filtering software, parental controls, and any other built-in safety features or parental control services offered by your internet provider. It is also recommended that children do not have devices in their rooms or areas they can not be physically monitored.

PREPARING A RESPONSE

At the end of the day, filters and controls can fail, and children can face a screen filled with content you never want them to see. Have discussions with your child about some of the content they may see – nudity, vulgar language, bullying, and talk about how they can respond. Parents must also prepare their response for when a child has chosen to engage with negative content as overreactions often shut down the conversation.

DISCUSSING EXPECTATIONS

Clearly communicate your expectations for your child's behavior online including what they search, what they post, where they visit, and how much time they spend online.

LEARN MORE

FOR PARENTS
commonsensemedia.org
protectyoungminds.org
netsmartz.org

FOR CHILDREN
Grades 1-4: netsmartzkids.org
Grades 3-5: digitalpassport.org
Grades 6-9: digitalcompass.org

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

ACCESS
When is it okay for my child to use technology?

I want my child to be at least _____ years old and show me that they can _____

and _____ before I give them _____

EXPOSURE TIME
A healthy allotment of screen time is one that does not disrupt a child's developmentally integral activities such as homework, positive relationships with family, sleep, extracurricular activities, and interacting with friends in real life. Create your own list of requirements before your child can have screen time.

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

A strategy for screen time management for our family could be:

_____

PARENTAL CONTROLS
Software does not replace supervision or the need for conversations about technology, but is an essential part of a comprehensive protection model.
Have I tried:
☐ Checking devices' embedded safety features
☐ Contacting my cell phone provider
☐ Contacting my home internet provider
☐ Third-party filtering and monitoring software

CONTENT REGULATION
Not all media content is appropriate for all ages. To determine what is most appropriate for your child, visit **commonsensemedia.org.** There you can search your child's request, then read age recommendations and the pros and cons to help make a more informed decision. It is recommended that devices are set up to require parental approval before downloading new apps or making purchases within apps.

ABOUT CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER OF COLLIN COUNTY

Children's Advocacy Center of Collin County is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that provides safety, healing, and justice to children victimized by abuse or neglect in Collin County. The Center works collaboratively with law enforcement and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to help children and their non-offending family members heal from the trauma of abuse.

SAFETY · HEALING · JUSTICE

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